

Introduction

Hazards exist in every workplace in many different forms: sharp edges, falling objects, flying sparks, chemicals, noise and a myriad of other potentially dangerous situations. The N.C. Department of Labor's (NCDOL) Occupational Safety and Health Division requires that employers protect their employees from workplace hazards that can cause injury.

Controlling a hazard at its source is the best way to protect employees. Depending on the hazard and workplace conditions, the employer may be required to use engineering or work practice controls first to manage or eliminate hazards to the greatest extent possible. For example, building a barrier between the hazard and the employees is an engineering control; changing the way in which employees perform their work is a work practice control.

When engineering, work practice and administrative controls are not feasible or do not provide sufficient protection, employers must provide personal protective equipment to their employees and ensure its use. Personal protective equipment, commonly referred to as "PPE," is equipment worn to minimize exposure to a variety of hazards. Examples of PPE include such items as gloves, foot and eye protection, protective hearing devices (earplugs, muffs), hard hats, respirators and full body suits.

This guide will help both employers and employees do the following:

- Understand the types of PPE.
- Know the basics of conducting a "hazard assessment" of the workplace.
- Select appropriate PPE for a variety of circumstances.
- Understand what kind of training is needed in the proper use and care of PPE.

The information in this guide is general in nature and does not address all workplace hazards or PPE requirements. The information, methods and procedures in this guide are based on the requirements for PPE as set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at 29 CFR 1910.132 (General requirements); 29 CFR 1910.133 (Eye and face protection); 29 CFR 1910.135 (Head protection); 29 CFR 1910.136 (Foot protection); 29 CFR 1910.137 (Electrical protective equipment); 29 CFR 1910.138 (Hand protection); and regulations that cover the construction industry, at 29 CFR 1926.28 (General safety and health provisions for personal protective equipment)/NCDOL state specific standard 13 NCAC 07F. 0202; 29 CFR 1926.95 (Criteria for personal protective equipment); 29 CFR 1926.96 (Occupational foot protection); 29 CFR 1926.100 (Head protection); 29 CFR 1926.101 (Hearing protection); and 29 CFR 1926.102 (Eye and face protection); and for the maritime industry at 29 CFR 1915.152 (General requirements); 29 CFR 1915.153 (Eye and face protection); 29 CFR 1915.155 (Head protection); 29 CFR 1915.156 (Foot protection); and 29 CFR 1915.157 (Hand and body protection).

This guide does not address PPE requirements related to respiratory protection (29 CFR 1910.134). There is a brief discussion of hearing protection in this guide, but users should refer to Industry Guide 15, *A Guide to Developing and Maintaining an Effective Hearing Conservation Program*.

The Requirement for Personal Protective Equipment

To ensure the greatest possible protection for employees in the workplace, the cooperative efforts of both employers and employees will help in establishing and maintaining a safe and healthful work environment.

In general, employers are responsible for:

- Performing a "hazard assessment" of the workplace to identify and control physical and health hazards.
- Identifying and providing appropriate PPE for employees.
- Training employees in the use and care of the PPE.
- Maintaining PPE, including replacing worn or damaged PPE.
- Periodically reviewing, updating and evaluating the effectiveness of the PPE program.
- Paying for PPE.

In general, employees should:

- Properly wear PPE.
- Attend training sessions on PPE.
- Care for, clean and maintain PPE.
- Inform a supervisor of the need to repair or replace PPE.

Specific requirements for PPE are presented in many different standards, published in Title 29 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (29 CFR).